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LAL BEHARI DAY

BY

HARI HAR DAS

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Lives of great men all remind us
We can make our lives sublime,
And, departing, leave behind us
Footprints on the sands of time.

LONGFELLOW

To

REV. W. S. URQUHART, M.A.

PROFESSOR OF THE SCOTTISH CHURCHES COLLEGE,
CALCUTTA

THIS LITTLE BOOK IS INSCRIBED
AS A TOKEN
OF REGARD AND ESTEEM

PREFACE

THE idea of writing a short biography of the late Rev. Lal Behari Day, for the student community, was first suggested to me by my esteemed friend the Rev. J. P. N. Biswas, B.A., of the C.M.S. (Calcutta), a short time ago. For his sympathy and encouragement I am greatly indebted to him. My desire is to give a brief summary of his life. Mr. Macpherson's 'Life of Lal Behari Day' is an excellent and original work on the subject, and it has afforded me much help in the compilation of this little volume. I am also deeply indebted to Mr. J. R. Bannerjea, M.A., B.L., Vice-Principal of the Metropolitan Institution (Calcutta), who has very kindly helped me with the Introduction. It would prove a source of pleasure to me should, this simple presentation of a great scholastic career characterized by high ideals, plain living and high thinking, be a stimulus to those for whom it is intended.

SODHIPASA JESSORE
September 25, 1911

H. H. DAS

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CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION	1
EARLY DAYS	7
CONVERSION TO CHRISTIANITY	14
AS A CHRISTIAN MINISTER	21
PROFESSOR AND LITERARY PURSUITS ...	25
RELIGIOUS VIEWS	30
LAST DAYS	31
CONCLUSION	33

INTRODUCTION

THE life of the Rev. Lal Behari Day was partly written by himself. In his *Recollections of My School Days* and his later work, *Recollections of Alexander Duff* as well as in his *Journals* and *Diary*, he has given us an autobiography the vivid pictures of which can never fade from our memories. His education under difficulties, spiritual growth, conversion to Christianity, work as catechist and missionary as well as his literary proclivities are all portrayed there in simple yet vigorous language and suggestive phrases. This autobiography, however, is not complete. To acquire a thorough knowledge of his career we must supplement it by his life written by Mr. G. Macpherson to which is prefixed an excellent Introduction by Dr. Thomas Smith. The latter was one of his revered teachers and baptized him; and consequently was in a position to write about him from personal, intimate knowledge. Mr. Macpherson's volume is readable and interesting and, though modest in size, it is of considerable literary merit. In discriminating criticism and accuracy of facts and details, it is in no

way inferior to the well-known biographies of other great missionaries, and it has for several years supplied a real want, for Lal Behari Day was a very distinguished Bengalee whose reputation had spread far and wide; hence there has been a great demand for his biography, not only in Bengal where he lived worked and died, but in other parts of India and even in England and Scotland, where his *Bengal Peasant Life* and *Folk Tales of Bengal* as well as the *Recollections of Alexander Duff* brought him to public notice. The present work is intended for students. It treats of the main events and incidents in the life of Lal Behari Day. The author has laid Mr. Macpherson's work under contribution and his estimate of the career of our distinguished countryman is just and accurate.

The writer of this Introduction first came to know Mr. Day when he, as a boy of six years old, accompanied his father to Mr. Day's house at Chinsurah. He still remembers seeing the venerable gentleman seated at a table and engaged in writing something; after writing it he drew his pen through much of what he had written and then put his sentences in their final form. Mr. Day was not readily satisfied with what he wrote. It is said of him that he resembled Macaulay in this respect. Just as the later, when correcting proofs, sometimes completely changed what he had written before, so did Mr. Day. His ideal of authorship was very high, and to this coupled with his literary gifts can be traced the

success he achieved as a writer. The most notable characteristics of his style are simplicity, vigour, and conciseness. He excelled in descriptive power. He could describe a village school or a marriage ceremony or games and amusements in a series of life-like pictures which would give the reader the impression that he actually saw them before his eyes.

Mr. Day was a most genial friend and companion. This is the testimony borne to his character by men of the older generation. He had natural wit and humour, flashes of which relieved the monotony not infrequently of his friends' conversation with him or his routine college work.

He won his laurels as a literary man, and his fame is due to his literary work. His literary proclivities, always strong, led in combination with other causes, to the resignation of his pastorate, yet he could never forget that he was above all a Christian missionary and minister. In some of the articles which he contributed to the *Calcutta Review* he denounces immoral customs or casts a glance of pity at the votaries of superstition. While a professor in the Hooghly College he regularly conducted a service in English on Sundays at Chinsurah. A few years before his death he contributed an excellent essay on the *Influence of the Bible on Nations* to a book which was presented by the Religious Tract Society of London to graduates of the Indian Universities.

He was an out-and-out Christian. He publicly criticized Brahmoism when Keshub Chandra Sen way trying to propagate it. He pointed out that this religion, though it had done good to the country by its protest against idolatory and in other ways yet failed to bring salvation, peace and happiness to mankind. 'I myself was once a Brahman, though not in name, yet in reality. I became sorry for my sins, and prayed to God to forgive them. But I enjoyed no peace of mind. I could not be sure that He would pardon my sins. I had not His word of promise. I was in despair. Then it was that the Lord took mercy upon me. He opened my eyes and showed to me Christ, in all the lustre of His mediatorial glory and the charm of His ineffable love. I then saw that Christianity supplied all my wants.' Thus spoke Mr. Day in a public lecture.

It was his love for Christ that was the mainspring of his life and enabled him to do much good work. He was a true patriot. In connexion with his *Bengal Peasant Life* the one note ever ringing in the reader's ear is that of Mr. Day's sympathy with the poor ryots and peasants in their joys as well as their sorrows; their oppression excited his burning indignation, and it was bound to do so for he had imbibed his Master's spirit and would he not love his fellowmen and bear their burden? It is an altogether wrong idea that Christianity makes one unpatriotic. The lives of Krishna Mehan Banerjea, Lal Behari Day, Ramchandra Bose and

Kali Charan Banurji, not to mention others, dispel this delusion.

The three great lessons of the life narrated in the following pages for students are: (1) that, if they want to have a mastery of the English language, they should read English literature like Lal Behari Day; their range of its study should be wide, and they should notice minutely idioms and peculiarities of expression; (2) that difficulties should not disconcert them; Lal Behari had great difficulties to face in learning English and getting a liberal education as his father's means were very limited, and yet he with indomitable perseverance conquered them all; (3) that they should have the courage of their convictions. The subject of the following memoir was convinced of the truth of Christianity and embraced it though in doing so he had to undergo a fiery trial.

The history of the church of Christ in Bengal has yet to be written. When it is written, Lal Behari's name will stand out in bold relief as that of a leader and great worker in it, who tried in humble dependence on God to make it a burning and a shining light in our dear fatherland and to elevate and purify the characteristics of the different races inhabiting India by the spiritual dynamic of Christianity. He was undoubtedly a great writer of English prose, and we, Bengalees, are proud to think how his productions have been admired by people of the West. But he was

greater still as a man of faith, as a true patriot whose heart yearned for the regeneration of India by the vital force of Christianity. In one of his latest compositions he says: 'I cannot help thinking that, if the people of India were converted to Christianity, they would become one of the greatest and noblest nations on the face of the earth. With a population of upwards of two hundred and fifty millions infinitely diversified in their capabilities, inferior to no people in physical or mental energy, India requires only the life-giving influence of Christianity to rouse herself from the torpor of ages and to lift up her head among the nations.' May she realize her high destiny by a living faith in Christ!

CALCUTTA J. R. BANERJIA
September 26, 1911

EARLY DAYS

THE life of the Rev. Lal Behari Day, the gifted Indian author of *Bengal Peasant Life*, *Folk Tales of Bengal*, possesses an undying interest for all lovers of English literature. The vein of quiet humour that pervades his pages, his thorough treatment of the subject upon which he writes, and his marvellous mastery over a foreign tongue, all combine to make his writings delightful. His name next to that of Dr. K. M. Bannerji stands prominent in the literary annals of Bengal. The fearless independence of his character, the stainless purity of his life and the broad sympathy he felt for the poor and down-trodden millions of his countrymen mark him out as a being far superior to the ordinary run of humanity. Such a life hardly fails to produce effects, and it is mainly with this object that we have thought fit to present our readers with some of the salient points in the life and character of this extraordinary man. He has several claims to our admiration and in several respects his life is deserving of both study and imitation. Lal Behari Day was born at Talpur in the district of Burdwan nearly seventy miles away from Calcutta in the year 1824. His father, though not a man of distinction and learning, spared no pains to give his son a

liberal education. His mother was evidently a woman of no enlightenment and consequently of the orthodox type. Lal Behari's early life was passed in the village pathsala (school) of Talpur. After leaving the village pathsala he removed to Calcutta, where his father desired to give him a good English education. In those dark days the people were very superstitious, and when it was known that Lal Behari's father wished to send his son to a missionary school, his friends and neighbours who were all orthodox Hindus and who had been very much excited over the first conversions to Christianity made by Dr. Duff in Calcutta, strongly insisted upon his abandoning the idea; but fortunately the wise old man had an eye to the future well-being of his son, and he turned a deaf ear to all their threats and pleadings. He got Lal Behari admitted into the General Assembly's Institution, founded by Dr. Alexander Duff in 1830, where the best education then procurable in India was given gratuitously. Having no means to buy new books he managed to purchase second-hand ones. He was, however, a very diligent and painstaking student and succeeded within a very short time in carrying off some of the best prizes of his class. But the old man was not long destined to see the success of his son at school; he died before Lal Behari reached his thirteenth year. The lad's early life was a long chapter of misfortunes and hardships. After his father's death the struggle became severe, so much so that happi-

ness was almost pushed out of his life. He would have been compelled to give up his studies had it not been for the generosity of a cousin, who kindly provided him with food and shelter in his house. By his father's death, too, he was deprived of the encouragement and help which his father had given him; yet he proved true to himself. His successes during the short period he attended the General Assembly's Institution stimulated him to greater exertions. Had his preceptors known all his circumstances they would not have hesitated to relieve the pressing needs of the promising lad, who had by his honesty and cleverness already established his claims upon their generosity. This happened later on, but at the time of his father's death the ties that held him fast to this institution sat so loosely upon him that he endeavoured to obtain admission into another school where he hoped he might reap the benefits of a better education. The Hindu College was then looked upon as one calculated to supply efficiently the great desire of his heart. But the high tuition fees charged there stood much in his way. The only means of getting out of this difficulty was to be first admitted into Hare's school, which possessed a privilege of sending for education a limited number of its distinguished students to the Hindu College at the expense of the school society. This being considered a feasible object he tried to obtain an interview with Mr. Hare himself, which he soon succeeded in doing. The following is

a graphic account in his own words of the scene he was introduced into and of the conversation that ensued between him and Mr. Hare: 'I was shown into a room upstairs, where I found Mr. Hare sitting at a small table. His face was towards the south; a Bengali somewhat older than I stood before him, his hat stood in the middle of the table and at his right-hand was a blackboard. As I approached him, he called me to his side took my hand, patted me on the cheek, put his left arm round my neck and asked me what I wanted. At this distance of time I could not recall all the details of the conversation I had with him, but to the best of my recollection the following was the sum and substance:—

'I wish, Sir, to be admitted into your school.'

'What school do you attend?'

'I am reading now in the General Assembly's Institution.'

'What books do you read?'

'I read Marshman's Brief Survey of History, Lennie's Grammar, Geography, Euclid (Book second), New Testament, and Bengali.'

'Do you know the seventh proposition of the first book of Euclid? Let me see you demonstrate it. Go to the board.'

The boy went to the board and enunciated the proposition to Mr. Hare's satisfaction. Then Mr. Hare resumed the conversation.

'You seem to be well taught; why do you wish to leave the General Assembly's Institution?'

'People say there is better teaching in your school; besides, I have a great desire to go to the Hindu College from your school.'

'There must be a very good teaching in the General Assembly's Institution; Dr. Duff has sent out a new missionary Mr. Campbell.'

'There is no one of the name of Campbell in the General Assembly's Institution; but perhaps you mean Mr. Macdonald?'

'Yes, yes, Mr. Macdonald; they all say he is a clever man. You had better remain where you are.'

'No, Sir; kindly admit me into your school.'

'You read the New Testament; you are half a Christian. You will spoil my boys.'

'I read the New Testament, because it is a class book, but I don't believe in it. I am no more a Christian than this boy here.'

'All Mr. Duff's pupils are half-Christians. I won't take any of them into my school. I won't take you; you are half a Christian; you will spoil my boys.'

'I begged hard,' Mr. Day continues. 'I earnestly besought him to take me into his school; but he kept repeating the words "you are half a Christian; you will spoil my boys."'

The above is taken from his *Recollections of my School days* Mr. Day said that he was thankful to

God that Mr. Hare did not take him into his school, for if he had taken him he would in all probability have been different from what he actually was. Mr. Day said of Mr. Hare that he was a man of no religious principles though he took the liveliest interest in the education of his countrymen; but he could not conceal the fact that he was not trammelled by any severe system of religious faith.

Finding no other door of learning open to him he reconciled himself as best as he could to his circumstances. Being convinced that there was no other avenue to learning he now made up his mind to settle down to hard work in the General Assembly's Institution. Rapidly he pushed himself to the front of his class and having once taken the lead he never again lost it. At the close of every session he stood first in his class, while for the last three years of his academic career he had, at the end of each the honour of winning the most coveted prize—the gold medal. On this well-earned distinction he looked back with pardonable pride. The high position attained among his classmates was all the more creditable to him when due allowance is made for the disadvantages under which he laboured. Chief of these was his lack of means to buy books. It has been truly said that there is no royal road to learning; but without books it is assuredly a rugged one. Books were dearer in those days than they are now, and to make up for the want of them taxed even his ingenuity. He could

not afford to buy anEnglish-Bengali Dictionary. He did in time, however, become the proud possessor of a mutilated second-hand copy of a pocket edition of Johnson's Dictionary, which he picked up for a few annas.

Arithmetic and algebra he learned by practice in the class room, never having had a textbook on either subject which he could call his own. Euclid's geometry was kindly lent him by one of the teachers. The higher mathematical treatises in use were luxuries too expensive for his purse; these he borrowed, and wrote out entire copies of them. Nevertheless he almost succeeded in gaining the highest mathematical prize awarded by the institution. Not in mathematics only did he excel but in every other branch of knowledge.

He kept quite as conspicuously ahead of his class-fellows in them all, winning golden opinions from his teachers for his vigorous understanding and unflagging industry.

While writing about this subject, we may mention the economical method he adopted for acquiring a wider knowledge of English literature. The plan which he hit upon for adding to his knowledge of English literature, whatever may be its claims to originality, had undoubtedly the merit of cheapness. Amongst other humble individuals to whose friendly offices he was indebted was an itinerant dealer in second-hand books, whose stock-in-trade consisted mostly of odd volumes, which he carried

in a bag when he went on his journey. This was the man from whom he had bought the mutilated Johnson's Dictionary. He also bought from the same person an old volume of Hume's *History*. After reading that history he had it exchanged for an odd volume of Addison's *Spectator*. The paucity of books at his command, serious disadvantage though it was, had one good effect upon him, it trained him to cultivate constantly the habit of carefully noting down and storing in his memory every scrap of useful information that fell into his hands.

CONVERSION TO CHRISTIANITY

When Lal Behari Day was bordering on nineteen he was formally baptized as a Christian. This was entirely due to the influence exercised over him by his youthful associates and the persuasive eloquence of the missionary professors who made a point every Sunday of addressing the students of the college assembled round them. Mr. Day says:—

> I was a most regular listener. I seldom missed any of them unless severe indisposition kept me confined to my house. If I am asked what led me to attend these lectures so regularly, I do not know that I can give a satisfactory answer; though I was that time of an inquiring disposition, can hardly say that the pure spirit of religious inquiry impelled me to attend those lectures—was it then the simple desire of hearing eloquent discourses, and I have always agreed with Milton, who says that 'Song charms the sense, but eloquence the Soul'?

Not only did the teaching at the General Assembly's Institution help him to accept Christianity but his own conviction, pure and unalloyed, of the truth of this life-saving faith brought about the happy consummation. Mr. Day himself acknowledges that his intellectual development and the formation of his moral character were chiefly due to five 'missionary fathers': the Rev. Dr. Duff, the Rev. Dr. Mackay, the Rev. Dr. Ewart, the Rev. John Macdonald, and the Rev. Dr. Thomas Smith. They were highly cultured and gifted teachers as well as spiritually advanced men. But of these Dr. Duff held the foremost place, his name being enshrined in the hearts of Europeans and Indians who had anything to do with the dawning of the blessings of Christianity in India. Many years after, when three of the five 'missionary fathers' had been called to their rest, Mr. Day had a very hard time of it, and he threw himself unreservedly into the company of such as were in spirit congenial to him. His acquaintance with them during his early years at school afterwards ripened into a warm friendship which went a great way towards colouring his future life and prospects. They were two young men, of great ability and promise—Mahendra Lal Basak and Kailas Chandra Mukerjea—who had embraced Christianity long before he himself received the rite of baptism in 1843. But the poor youths were unfortunately cut off in their prime. Mr. Day acknowledges

in glowing terms the obligation that they had laid him under:—

Kailas was not all the time with us; but Mahendra and I sat together from two to six o'clock in the evening, talking and reading to each other. I was generally the reader and Mahendra the listener. We read, of course, religious books, as Mahendra, being a Christian and a Presbyterian, would not read anything else on Sundays. In this way he and I went through Milton's *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*, Young's *Night Thoughts*, Pollok's *Course of Time*, Graham's *Sabbath* and several volumes of sermons by distinguished English and Scotch divines.

The sincere spirit of inquiry after truth that gradually grew upon him, and was fanned into a flame by the stirring and convincing words of the Christian preachers, quietly prepared the way for his conversion. It is interesting to watch the successive steps by which this was accomplished. To quote his own words:—

The name of Jesus was ever associated in my mind with everything that is holy, good and virtuous, so that in point of fact I do not remember at this moment any day in my past life when I was an alien from the commonwealth of Israel, and lived without God, without Christ, without hope in this world, if any day I vilified the name of Jesus, spoke evil of Christians, and spoke against divine Christianity. In my worst days—days of daring impiety and godlessness—I had a respect for the religion of Jesus. This was owing, I believe, to the early saturation of my mind with its blessed principles.

He ever retained throughout his whole life the spirit of earnestness that characterized him in his early years. This finds a striking illustration in

the way in which he acquitted himself both at school and college. Certainly it is said he was a diligent student of the Bible for some years before he abandoned Hinduism; and how thoroughly and effectively he prosecuted this study the following circumstances afforded ample evidence. In 1841 two years before his baptism, he gained two prizes which were open to and competed for by students from all the college classes of the General Assembly's Institution. One of these was for the 'most accurate knowledge of scripture proofs for doctrines', while was the other for an essay on the 'conversion of St. Paul, viewed as an argument for the truth of the gospel'; the money value of these prizes was respectively twenty-five and thirty-five rupees. The next year he won a prize of fifty rupees, offered by Dr. Charles, the then senior chaplain of the Scotch Church in Calcutta, for the best essay on the 'falsity of the Hindu religion'. When Dr. Charles read Lal Behari Day's essay, he concluded from its tone that it had been written by one who was still nominally a Hindu. A short time after this prize had been awarded to him, he went in the company of some converts to the weekly prayer-meeting held in St. Andrew's Church. At the close of the service he was asked by Dr. Charles whether he was soon coming forward as a candidate for baptism, but he remained silent. He declined to be hurried into a profession of Christianity until he fully knew his own mind. It was too solemn a

step to be taken lightly, and for six months longer he continued to weigh the matter before coming to a decision. After much heedful consideration, he resolved to present himself as a candidate for baptism in July, 1843. To a Christian convert from Hinduism in those days baptism meant a considerable amount of suffering; the severest ordeal he had to undergo was the complete and utter separation from all who were near and dear to him. The following passage from Mr. Day's Journal of a preaching tour, undertaken in the beginning of 1849, rather more than five years after his baptism, will help the reader to conceive how hard the trial was to one of his sensitive nature. Though he does not distinctly say so, this apparently was the first occasion of his revisiting the place of his birth after cutting himself adrift from the religion of his boyhood:—

> The sun had declined from his meridian height, so the entry of his Journal runs, when I saw the tall trees of my nativity looming through the distance. The scene of my childhood; the fields thickly covered with grain, sugar-cane, and cotton; the raised and high embankments of my native tanks (ponds), covered with mango and palm trees and the stately asvatha (Ficus religiosa), intertwined as these were with my boyish associations, produced in me feelings not to be described. Then I stood before the door of my own home, to me as familiar as the face of an old friend; instead of being greeted with rejoicings, I was welcomed with cries and tears. The report of my coming had gone forth before I reached the village, and the whole neighbourhood had come out to greet me. On every side nothing was seen or heard but lamentations,

mourning and woe. Scenes like these—scenes created by causes little understood by foreigners on account of their connexion with the inner texture of Hindu manners—occur to every native convert, and constitute after all, his chief privation, and the influence of which is felt by him more than the loss of the wealth of Ormuz, India, or the late discovered Eldorads of California.'

The following is taken almost *verbatim* from Mr. Day's diaries of two mission tours made by himself in company with a brother convert, whom he designates as L—— :—

About midday we came to L——'s native place. His mother and friends treated us very kindly. It would be impossible for Europeans to form an adequate idea of the sacrifices which a respectable native makes when embracing the Christian religion. We speak not of pecuniary sacrifices, but we speak of the rending of the social, paternal, filial, and fraternal ties, which is the immediate effect of the conversion of a Hindu youth. This is rendered inevitable from the institution of caste, which has taken false hold upon the minds of the Hindus. And the separation of a native Christian from his family is more felt in this country than it would be in any other for another reason, namely, that in this country, fathers, mothers, sons and their wives all live together. L——'s mother wept bitterly when she saw him. Nor was she alone in this, for several other women soon caught the infection; nor could L—— remain without weeping. The scene was affecting beyond description. L——'s mother cooked for him and for his friends, and she herself placed food before them, as if they had not become Christians.

Next year they together revisited L——'s native village, and Mr. Day again thus describes their reception.

L——was received by his mother and brother with the greatest kindness, and mixed feelings of joy and sorrow—joy in seeing her son before her, sorrow that he had embraced the Christian religion. Many were the men and women and children that came to see him, and wept with great lamentation over him. He conversed on Christianity with his first teacher, who had taught him the Bengali alphabet. After L—— had retired for the night and composed himself to sleep in the same room with his brother, a scene which can never be effaced from the tablet of his memory occurred. It was past midnight, L——'s mother had laid herself on her bed, but had enjoyed no repose. Her mind had been brooding over the tender recollections of his youthful days, and her troubled spirit had found no rest. And now at one o'clock in the morning, not being able to contain herself, she opens the door and comes to L——'s bed, kisses him with ecstatic fondness, bedews his face with her tears, and sobs and weeps aloud. L——who had hitherto been asleep, becomes suddenly awakened. No words could convey a sufficient idea of the emotions with which his mind was filled. His mother, again and again, in a fit of ecstasy, clasped him in her arms and kissed him. This was too much for human nature to bear, and L—— giving way to tears, cried out to God, 'Oh, my Father, have mercy upon my poor mother; convert her soul, and then by thy grace, shall we dwell together in the mansions of eternal glory.'

But in spite of all these difficulties Lal Behari never shrank from the faith that he had so carefully and prayerfully accepted. He fully realized and followed minutely the words of the Lord Jesus: 'He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me,' and to the end of his life as you will see later on he kept his faith and remained loyal and faithful to his Master.

AS A CHRISTIAN MINISTER

In 1846 he was appointed catechist with his two friends Mahendra Lal Basak and Kailas Chandra Mukerjea. On this occasion he wrote to a friend a statement of his reason for aspiring to the office of the Christian ministry. He said :—

> It is nevertheless a fact that the office of the ministry had attractions for me before admission into the visible church of Christ, by the rite of baptism. As far as I can remember back, the first time that I felt a desire of becoming a Christian and serving Christ in the ministry of His gospel, was on the occasion of my late excellent friends, Mahendra Lal Basak and Kailas Chandra Mukerjea, forwarding themselves to be catechists, when Dr. Duff delivered, in the lecture room of the General Assembly's Institution, a most impressive address on the nature and the responsibility of the office of the Christian ministry. The causes which then excited this desire in me it is impossible at this distance of time to say, whether it was the external grandeur and sublimity with which the office was invested in my mind, or the express realization of some favourite wishes which I might have had at the time I cannot tell.

During the next few years the three catechists prosecuted together their studies under the supervision of the missionary professors. These studies included Greek, Hebrew, Church History and systematic theology. In 1851 all three were licensed to preach by the Free Church Presbytery of Calcutta. On being licensed to preach, Mr. Day was sent to the Free Church Mission at Calna, but was transferred to Calcutta sometime before his ordination in 1855. While carrying on his mission Mr.

Day, in company with other catechists, made what he called preaching tours during the winter season through the villages of Western Bengal, distributing tracts and copies of the New Testament to people who could read and were willing to receive them. Mr. Day has left a very interesting account of these tours which are largely made up of conversations and discussions with Hindus, occasionally also with Muḥammadans, on the subject of religion. They give also a glimpse of the obstacles which the Christian missionaries had to face fifty years ago. On one occasion when sailing up the Hooghly river he took the opportunity of putting a few questions to one of his boatmen whose answers were somewhat shuffling. On entering a village Mr. Day and his companions went to the house of one of the more respectable residents where, as a rule, they were courteously received. The following is an instance from Mr. Day's Journal:—

Accordingly we came to the house to which we had been directed. We saw there the head of the household deeply absorbed in devotion, with copper vessels before him. At the distance of two or three yards before him, a mat was spread for us to sit on. On our account, as we afterwards perceived, he stopped in the middle of his devotions and inquired of us the object of our visit. He spoke kindly to us for a few minutes, answered all the questions we put to him concerning the place, the condition of the people, the state of education, etc.; and then asking a pandit who was sitting by him to talk with us, he proceeded with his devotion. We had a long talk o some hours with the pandit on the Vedas and Puranas. He

defended the doctrine of pantheism and the system of idolatry. Following out his pantheistic notions, he said that if a man loved money he might worship it, for money was part of God.

The reception which they got during their preaching tour amongst non-Christians was not always pleasant; and the following passage in which Mr. Day narrates the rude treatment they were subjected to in a village that lay in their way from Burdwan to Calna will enable us to understand the difficulties Christian missionaries had experienced fifty years earlier:—

Towards sunset we entered a village when some persons of respectable appearance inquired who we were. We told them we were Christians and wanted shelter for the night; at this one of them rose up very furiously, and in a loud contemptuous tone, bawled out: 'Away, away, ye Christians! Go away from this village. No Christian shall be allowed to pollute it by living in it. Cursed be Christianity, cursed be those that become Christians! Away, away, no place for Christians in this village!

But even when courteously received, there was always some restraint to free intercourse, imposed by the rigid rules of caste upon Hindu hospitality to Christians. On another occasion, Mr. Day notes that 'certain Brahmins were very much amused at the novel spectacle of Christians eating rice in a Brahmin's house;' and then he adds:—

We mention these, because they demonstrate the tottering state of Brahminism and the whole system of Hinduism; for even to touch a Christian would by an orthodox Hindu be reckoned an abomination.

Of the names Mr. Day noted down in his 'journals' appears that of an old man, Govinda Samanta, whom he describes as an interesting person who had no faith in the Hindu Shastras, but had imbibed many Christian sentiments, and was consequently looked upon with contempt by his Brahmin neighbours.

Mr. Day's early struggles had taught him how to measure his own strength, and, at the same time, had developed his self-reliance. At the time of his conversion, as we have seen, he refused, even when he had practically discarded his early religion, to be hurried into a public profession of Christianity until he had weighed the matter carefully in his mind and become fully convinced of the truth of its doctrines. Mr. Day after four years' mission at Calna was transferred to the pastorate of the Free Mission Church in Cornwallis Square, Calcutta, on the death of Dr. Ewart. In the earlier part of his superintendence of the Calna mission, Mr. Day was kept busily employed in putting the school connected with it on a better footing. Mr. Day now resolved to settle down in life, and married the daughter of the Rev. Hormazdji Pestonji of Surat. A cordial reception was given to Mr. and Mrs. Day in Calcutta by his old friends belonging to the mission; and that lady proved a very faithful, loving and sympathetic helpmate to him throughout his wedded life. While at Cornwallis Square he was well known outside the limits

of his church. Though secular teaching was henceforth the business of his life, his heart was ever warm towards his old friends of the mission and its work. He would not drop the title of Reverend when, as a professor of Hooghly College, it was supposed by some of his friends that it stood in the way of his promotion in the educational service. As a faithful minister of the Church of Christ he had great love for converts. He knew their difficulties and troubles, and was always ready to show hearty sympathy with them.

PROFESSOR AND LITERARY PURSUITS

Later on Mr. Day's mind was engrossed in English literature; but he never forgot to preach the gospel of Jesus to his countrymen. When he was appointed to the mission at Calna (after finishing his course of theological studies) he found relaxation from the labour of teaching and preaching in composing essays on various subjects. These were among the first productions from his pen to pass through the press, and were published in a small volume. He sent a copy of this to his fiancée's father the Rev. Hormazdji Pestonji with a most admirable note in which he explains the circumstances under which these essays were written. He describes them as being 'of a light character, for the most part having been written as what Professor Wilson would call literary recreations'. And he adds:—

By the way most of those articles were written while I was at Calna on a former occasion. Now that I am at Calna

again, I trust that my literary enthusiasm will return upon me with redoubled force. Ere long you will see me, I hope, again in the *Calcutta Review*, as the editor has already asked me to contribute.

The editor of the *Calcutta Review* at that time was his old professor, the Rev. Dr. T. Smith, who early admired Mr. Day for his literary talent. Mr. Day took Dr. Smith's seasonable advice in all matters connected with literature, and Dr. Smith did all in his power to encourage him in every way possible. This is one of the letters to Dr. Smith:—

Calna, 26th September, 1867.

To

The Rev. T. Smith.

My dear Sir,

I have been thinking for a long time of writing for the *Calcutta Review*, but am utterly at a loss for a subject. Some subjects do indeed suggest themselves to my mind, but I know not whether you would like them. I have a paper nearly ready on the 'Life and labours of Dr. Carey'. Would you care, if after perusal you thought it worthy, to put it in the *Review*. For many reasons I should like now and then to contribute to the *Review*. You know well what is in me. Will you, therefore, kindly suggest to me subjects on which I may write? Trusting this will find you in perfect health.

Yours affectionately,

LAL BEHARI DAY

It was in his quiet and less absorbing country life at Calna that his literary enthusiasm was seen at its best. To come to matters more distinctly literary, Mr. Day never took up journalism as a profession, nor is there any ground for supposing that he ever thought of doing so. The interval which elapsed between his first engagement at the Calna mission and his return to it was spent in Calcutta. It was during this time that he commenced editing a vernacular paper, which was introduced under the title of *Arunaday*. He had undertaken the editorship of this paper on the advice of his 'missionary fathers'. Before leaving Calcutta, he thought of giving up his connexion with this paper which was not of long duration. It was his first introduction to editorial duties. Mr. Day, however, aimed at something more than merely conducting a newspaper. It was not the pursuit of literary fame that spurred him on, still less the hope of pecuniary reward. To assist in the work of educating the people of India was looked upon by him as a sacred duty imposed upon him, which he conscientiously and assiduously endeavoured to perform. But this was not enough. He felt, and felt strongly that many Europeans sojourning in India had much to learn regarding its people; that in many instances they seemed better acquainted with and more inclined to remember their vices than their virtues; and, in consequence of this attitude, western ideas were less acceptable to the latter

than they would have been had a better understanding and greater mutual respect for each other existed between them.

Through the medium of the English language he could address the better educated among his countrymen. Mr. Day was the editor of the *Indian Reformer* for little more than a year, he then took up the editorial duties of the *Friday Review*, in which he made his mark as a journalist, and it also opened a clear path into Government service. How the door of Government service was thrown open to him through his connexion with the *Friday Review* is easily explained. During the great famine in Orissa, the then Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, Sir Cecil Beadon, was blamed by a portion of the press for not having adopted, as was alleged, proper measures to cope with that calamity. The *Friday Review* was one of the newspapers that warmly defended the course pursued by the Lieutenant-Governor. In return for the support thus accorded him, Sir Cecil Beadon, on retiring from office, recommended its editor to the Director of Public Instruction, who in consequence of this recommendation shortly afterwards offered Mr. Day the post of headmaster of the Berhampore Collegiate School. Mr. Day decided to accept it and entered on his new sphere of duty in September, 1867. It goes without saying that his promotion in the educational service was due to his literary abilities. Sir Richard Temple in a letter to

Mr. Day explained that his promotion was entirely due to his rare literary gifts, which had become prominent by the appearance of his book *Bengal Peasant Life*, a book written on social and domestic life of the rural population of Bengal. It was written in the year 1871 and published in 1874, for this he gained a prize of £50, offered by Babu Joy Kissen Mukerjea of Uttarpara. The peculiar circumstances under which it was written were recorded by him in the preface. This book will secure for him a place in the highest rank of great writers of fiction in the English tongue. No pen proved mightier than Mr. Day's in trying to remove the blots that he describes in his book, namely, the oppression from time immemorial by zamindars (landlords) of their tenants. From Berhampore Mr. Day was transferred to Hooghly College as a professor of English literature where he remained until he finally retired from Government service. Here in the year 1872 he started his *Bengali Magazine*. As the editor of this paper his name became widely known among the educated classes, and it was published for a number of years. He studied English literature which he passionately admired, with a zeal surpassed by few. Blocked though his way was by serious obstructions, nothing could damp his ardour in this pursuit, and while still a young man he made himself familiar with the works of the best English writers. The masterpieces of his writings are *Bengal Peasant Life* and the *Folk Tales of Bengal.*

RELIGIOUS VIEWS

Mr. Lal Behari Day was an earnest Christian. In every stage of his life he showed a firm faith in his Master. His letter to Mr. Ganendra Mohan Tagore shows the early light beaming in him while yet a Hindu for the truth of Christianity. He wrote :—

> That a more intellectual and speculative faith in the doctrine of the Bible can never save a man. I might believe historically in Jesus Christ, intellectually in the doctrine of the atonement ; of original sin ; of substitutionary sacrifice ; of unmerited pardon ; of the resurrection of the Christian and the unbeliever unto life and damnation, yet I might not be saved. Orthodoxy in doctrine is not an infallible test of one's eternal safety. A thoroughly felt and overwhelming conviction of one's utter sinfulness in the sight of heaven ; of the impossibility of his obtaining salvation by anything that he can do ; and of the all-sufficiency of the atonement made by Christ ; and appropriation of Christ by means of a living faith ; a going forth of the soul to Him at all times and under all circumstances ; a forsaking of darling bosom sins, a loving and delighting in internal purity of the heart ; a diligence to keep the heart with care, a constant felt and habitual dependence on Almighty grace, all these can alone afford to a sinner a well-grounded hope of eternal happiness.

Mr. Day had very little sympathy for the fine-drawn distinctions of dogmatic theology ; and with narrow sectarianism he had none at all. The religious movement known as the Brahmo Somaj, with its eclectic teaching, had caught and retained

him for a while in its toils. Babu Keshub Chunder Sen was then its leader.

LAST DAYS

We have now come to the closing period in Lal Behari Day's career—his retirement and death. Not long after he was placed on the retired list, Mr. Day's health rapidly gave way from various causes. Domestic disappointment added to his troubles. His journalistic and literary undertakings also led him to spend money for which he got no adequate return, and this, in his failing health, so far added to his anxiety as thoroughly to break down his strength. His eyesight failed him, and for some years before he died he was practically blind. This loss of sight was felt keenly, though his wife and daughters helped to solace him by reading to him whatever he desired. After this calamity he would insist on his family going to church on Sunday evenings, that he might be left alone. His wife asked him how he spent his time when thus alone, and his reply was, 'Those moments are mostly spent in inward prayer for you, the children, and myself, and in meditations.' Once during his last illness he said to his daughters, 'See, we must all meet there,' pointing heavenwards. He used to say, 'I shall not be blind in heaven.' On the twenty-eighth of October, 1894, after a lingering illness of seven weeks, Mr. Day passed away by

the cold and iron hand of death to his eternal rest firm in his faith in Jesus Christ. A few hours before his end he seemed conscious of what was said to him, though his eyes were shut, and his tongue and throat were becoming paralyzed. At that time he felt comforted by the verse, 'Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest,' which his youngest daughter repeated to him from the scripture. Throughout his illness his mind and thoughts were quite withdrawn from the present world, and always dwelt on things spiritual and the future state. During the last two years of his life, Mr. Day used to read works on the life, death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, besides the *Holy Living* and *Holy Dying* of Jeremy Taylor, and similar books. He left behind him his wife, three sons, of whom fortunately one is a member of the Provincial Civil Service, and three daughters, to mourn his loss. His remains were buried in the quiet Scotch Cemetery on the outskirts of Calcutta. On the tombstone is engraved, 'Thine eyes shall behold the King in His beauty. For ever with the Lord.' On his death the principal of the Free Church Institution preached his funeral sermon to his old congregation in Cornwallis Square, and gave an excellent and appreciate summary of his life, while the principal of the General Assembly's Institution headed a movement to erect some memorial to his name in that institution. This

has been done in the form of a tablet placed on its walls on the following inscription occurs :—

In memory of

The Rev. Lal Behari Day,

A student of the General Assembly's Institution under Dr. Duff, 1834 to 1844; Missionary and Minister of the Free Church of Scotland, 1855 to 1867; Professor of English literature in the Government colleges at Berhampore and Hughly, 1867 to 1889; Fellow of the University of Calcutta from 1877; and well known as a journalist, and as author of *Bengal Peasant Life*, and other works.

Born at Talpur, Burdwan, 18th December, 1824; died at Calcutta, 28th October, 1894.

Some of his surviving pupils and of his numerous admirers have erected this tablet.

CONCLUSION

There are few, who will not agree that this tribute to his memory is exceedingly appropriate, seeing that by his example he showed the youth of India, what hey might do by steadfast perseverance, and that,

in a measure, he led the way in acquiring education and showed present generation, how to take the highest honours at the English Universities. To them the example of his whole life ought to be an incentive to noble endeavour. Taken all in all, he was more a tiller of the soil than a reaper of the harvest, but he was all the same, a missionary in the broadest and fullest, and possibly the richest sense of the term. Thus far we have sought to weave into a more or less connected story a few of the more prominent facts in the life of one who must be considered a man of mark among the thinkers and reformers of India. Certainly any history of her missions or literature would be incomplete without some reference to his work. The life of the man who, either by the force of genius, energy, or industry, comes to the front of his contemporaries as a leader and teacher is worthy to be remembered. If he has won for himself a name, in spite of being handicapped at the outset by adverse circumstances, then his life is not without its lessons. Few names in Bengal are so widely known or universally respected as his.

The advent of the English brought in its train not only material progress, but it also opened the way to her sons and daughters to receive a Western education. Lal Behari Day received this education and became the prototype of that roll of literary geniuses whom Lord Curzon hoped India would produce.

The real greatness of a nation rests with the character of its people; it can have no surer foundation than a pure religion. Imbued with this idea Mr. Day in his own sphere laboured to bring others to the feet of Christ.

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